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ABSTRACT

One of the most important recent developments in comparative adult education (CAE) has been the formation in 1987 of the Committee for Study and Research in Comparative Adult Education (CSRCAE), jointly founded by the International Council of Adult Education and the International Congress of University Adult Education. The Committee continues to be active in a number of ways: through a series of communications mailed by the Secretary; through face-to-face communication at meetings and conferences CSRCAE members have attended; and through ad hoc sessions held at various international sites. One of CSRCAE's contributions is a definition of the field of CAE which is broadly acceptable to practitioners and which distinguishes it clearly from the field of International Adult Education. CAE has some antecedents in Comparative Education and both may be seen within the paradigm of lifelong education. The first international conference on the comparative study of adult education was held in 1966 at Exeter, New Hampshire. The Exeter group's definition of the main subject matter for comparative study has proven helpful through the years. Since Exeter, a number of events have nurtured work in CAE. There has been a growth in the activity of international bodies with an interest in adult education either from a policy or academic standpoint. UNESCO has sponsored a series of international conferences on adult education. The World Bank has stimulated an interest in adult and nonformal education. Professional international bodies have provided a dynamic thrust through meetings and conferences that provide opportunities for face-to-face meetings and that facilitate networking. Scholarly contributions on CAE have increased significantly. Furthermore, the studies and research in this emerging field are becoming increasingly vigorous. (YLB)

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# Syracuse University

COMPARATIVE STUDIES IN ADULT EDUCATION - A REVIEW

Presented at the VIII[th] World Congress of Comparative Education
Prague, Czechoslovakia

Alexander N. Charters

June 1992

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Professor Emeritus Adult Education

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CONTENTS

Preamble . . . . . 1

History and Origins of Comparative Adult Education. . . . . 3

International Activity Fostering an Interest in Adult Education. . . . . 5

International Professional Organizations and Scholarly Activity. . . . . 9

International Scholarly Effort in Comparative Adult Education . . . . . 11

End Notes. . . . . 15

This paper is revised and expanded from Part I of the Background Paper: Comparative Studies in Adult Education. Evolution of the Field and Its Relevance for Countries of the South, by Lalage Bown, Joseph T. Okedara, & Alexander Charters. Proceedings of World Conference on Comparative Adult Education, University of Ibadan, Nigeria, 1991.

# COMPARATIVE ADULT EDUCATION

Alexander N. Charters

## Preamble

Attention to the field of Comparative Adult Education has increased significantly in the past three decades. This Paper traces the history of this area of study then highlights some of the issues and reviews resources which are available for researchers in the field. A bibliography is included in the End Notes.

One of the most important recent developments has been the formation of the Committee for Study and Research in Comparative Adult Education (CSRCAE), jointly founded by the International Council of Adult Education (ICAE) and the International Congress of University Adult Education (ICUAE) in 1987. The most recent World Conference on Comparative Adult Education held at the University of Ibadan was under the auspices of CSRCAE which currently has 57 members in 22 countries.

CSRCAE has, as its purposes:

1. To promote identity of the field of Comparative Adult Education;
2. To study and provide research in the field;
3. To advance the field of Comparative Adult Education;
4. To enhance the continuing interest of the two international organizations (ICAE and ICUAE) in Comparative Adult Education as well as strengthen linkages with other groups and associations who have a similar interest.

The Committee continues to be active in a number of ways. A series of communications (1 through 13) has been mailed by the Secretary. Face to face communication has been possible at meetings and conferences which members of CSRCAE have attended. Ad hoc sessions have been held at: Frascati, Italy (Fourth Conference on Comparative Research in Adult Education, 1988); Bangkok, Thailand (ICAE Assembly, 1990); Edinburgh, Scotland (SCUTREA, 1991); Ibadan, Nigeria (World Conference on Comparative Adult Education, 1991); and Tantur, Israel (International Conference on Meeting of Cultures and Clash of Cultures: Adult Education in Multicultural Societies, 1992).

CSRCAE has been functioning in the English language. Plans are made to identify materials in other languages and thus increase the accessibility of resources for study and research.

One of the contributions of CSRCAE has been to define the field of Comparative Adult Education in a way which is broadly acceptable to practitioners and researchers which distinguishes it clearly from the field of International Adult Education.

The field as defined by Charters includes:

> (a) Statements about the theory, principles, methodology and other topics of comparative studies related to adult education, and (b) studies comparing a topic on comparative adult education in two or more situations. A comparative adult education study needs to extend beyond description of adult education in two or more situations and/or a juxtaposition of adult education data. There must be analysis and comparison to identify similarities and dissimilarities. An intra-national study is the comparison of a topic in two or more situations within one country and an international study is the comparison of a topic in two or more countries (Koepper, 1989).

Since the early stages of its development, CSRCAE has focussed on Comparative Adult Education at the international level in contrast to the intra-national level.

Dr. Robert Koepper, College of Environmental Science and Forestry (SUNY), Syracuse, New York served as an excellent Secretary 1987-1990. Professor John Morgan, University of Nottingham, was designated Secretary in 1990. Alexander Charters continues as Chair.

History and Origins of Comparative Adult Education*

Comparative Adult Education had some of its antecedents in Comparative Education and both may be seen within the paradigm of lifelong education. Both have been influenced by some of the same scholars from Western countries beginning with Marc Antony Julian and followed by others such as Kandel, Hans, Bereday, King, and Holmes. Siddiqui has described some of the contributions of earlier as well as contemporary scholars from Eastern countries (Siddiqui, 1990). Comparative Adult Education has benefited from methods developed by Comparative Education and has begun to generate its own concepts and scholarly activity as well as to define its own character and interests within the overall field. Indeed a number of scholars from developing countries have pioneered the field, including several from the University of Ibadan, which generated the first book to attempt a cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary study of Adult Education (Bown and Okedara, 1981).

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*As reflected in the bibliography, the author draws extensively on his own works and refers only to works in the English language.

Some scholars use the term cross-cultural Adult Education. The term multi-cultural is also used. This difference is evident in the following perspective on multi-cultural:

> One advantage of the term multi-cultural is that it implies a wide range of multiple groups without grading, comparing, or ranking them as better or worse than one another and without denying the very distinct and complementary or even contradictory perspectives that each group brings with it. This definition of culture is complex and dynamic but not chaotic. Each of us belongs to many different cultures at different times, in different environments and in different roles. Within-group differences are at least as important as between-group differences in the multi-cultural perspective (Pedersen, 1991).

Another evolving perspective is the attention being given to the recognition, understanding, and development of the trans-cultural aspects of Comparative Adult Education both in terms of the researcher and the researched (Boucouvales, 1991). The term Comparative Adult Education is characterized in that it identified similarities and differences.

The first international conference on the Comparative study of Adult Education was held in 1966 - at Exeter, USA. A small group of scholars, mainly from North America and Europe, met "To review and refine a conceptual framework for examining adult education activities, programmes and institutions in various countries on a comparative basis amd to examine and describe similarities and differences in such activities in line with this conceptual framework" (Liveright & Haygood, 1968, p. 2). The conceptual framework, based on a cultural diffision model already looks extraordinarily dated and has since been drastically reworked, but the Exeter group's definition of the main

subject-matter for comparative study has proven helpful through the years. The main elements which they listed were:

> Thoughts and ideas relevant to and about Adult Education;
> Institutions and structures, including legislation about and funding for Adult Education;
> Participants in Adult Education activities - learners and teachers; facilitators;
> Learning/teaching processes and methods;
> Achievements and problems in various programmes, institutions and policies (Liveright and Haygood, 1968).

The base for comparison was set by the development of country case-studies, since it was accepted that there was an extreme dearth of reliable and coherent information. It will be seen from the CSRCAE definition that this type of activity may supply the raw material, but is not in itself seen as a Comparative Adult Education activity.

In retrospect the Exeter conference, however, was both a catalyst to and an indication of the development of a new field emerging out of Comparative Education and Adult Education.

It is not the intent to identify nor discuss the various topics in adult education which are treated in the various resources referred to in this paper.

## International Activity Fostering an Interest in Adult Education

Comparative Education has to some extent grown out of International Education and Comparative Adult Education itself has some of its antecedents in Comparative Education (Charters & Hilton, 1989).

In 1918, prior to Exeter, a volunrary organization, the World Association for Adult Education, was set up largely on the impetus of the British, led by Albert Mansbridge. It was

later supported by leaders in many countries including the American Association for Adult Education which was founded in 1926 with a grant from the Carnegie Corporation. The World Association of Adult Education which organized the first international conference on Adult Education at Cambridge University in 1929, floundered in the adverse economic climate of the 1930s. While the Conference in itself was a landmark, there was no mention of comparative studies in the Order of Proceedings of that Conference.

During this period there were also a few scholars with an interest in Adult Education from a comparative standpoint. One was Robert Peers who held the Chair of Adult Education at the University of Nottingham 1923-1953 (Peers, 1958). In 1980 another publication, Comparative Adult Education, provides information about International Adult Education and includes some important discussion on Comparative Adult Education (Harris, 1980).

Since Exeter, a number of events have nurtured work in comparative studies of Adult Education. There has been a growth in the activity of international bodies with an interest in Adult Education either from a policy standpoint or an academic one. These developments have promoted interchanges of ideas which have fostered scholarly and cultural diffusion as well as attempts at model-making.

Two intergovernmental organizations have played important roles - UNESCO and the World Bank. UNESCO sponsored a series of international conferences on Adult Education:

1. International Conference of Adult Education held at Elsinore, Denmark (1949);

2. International Conference on Adult Education held at Montreal, Canada (1960);

3. International Conference on Adult Education held at Tokyo, Japan (1972);

4. International Conference on Adult Education held at Paris, France (1985).

A Tale of Three Cities is in a sense a comparative analysis of three of the International Conferences on Adult Education (Kidd, 1974).

The presentations at these conferences primarily treated topics on Adult Education in member states, e.g., literacy in one or more countries but manifested little concern for Comparative Adult Education, in line with the definition given above. Moreover, the UNESCO Conference at Elsinore was largely taken up with issues of interest only to Europeans. Each successive meeting, however, has broadened in scope, and the one held in Paris in 1985 was one of the largest conferences ever sponsored by UNESCO on any subject. UNESCO also contributed to the conceptualization of Comparative Adult Education, e.g., through the seminal report, Learning to Be (Faure, 1972) which collated ideas and policies from many countries to develop a new concept of lifelong learning. The work of staff members, such as Paul Lengrand, who wrote on the idea of lifelong learning (Lengrand, 1975) and more recently, Ettore Galpi, who is interested in the relationship of Adult Education and work (Gelpi, 1978), added important dimensions. In 1976, the UNESCO General Conference at its 10th session held

in Nairobi agreed on a recommendation on Adult Education which attempted a broad definition as follows:

> . . . the term "adult education" denotes the entire body of organized educational processes, whatever the content, level and method, whether formal or otherwise, whether they prolong or replace initial education in schools, colleges and universities as well as in apprenticeship, whereby persons regarded as adult by the society to which they belong develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge, improve their technical or professional qualifications and bring about changes in their attitudes or behaviour in the twofold perspective of full personal development and participation in balanced and independent social, economic and cultural development (UNESCO, Annex I, 1976, p. 2).

Following the 1971 General Conference, UNESCO prepared a book on Terminology in Adult Education which is useful to scholars in both International Adult Education and Comparative Adult Education (Titmus, 1979).

Over the past twenty years, the World Bank has stimulated an interest in adult and non-formal education, starting from a systems approach to education questioning the efficacy and practicality in many countries of policies of schooling for all. It also studied cases in which less formal varieties of education were related to development. The watershed was the publication of Philip Coombs' World Crisis in Education (Coombs, 1968), which was followed by substantial comparative work relating non-formal education to development carried out by Coombs and his colleagues (Coombs & Ahmed, 1974). The World Bank influenced the Commonwealth Education Ministers' Conferences. It also laid stress on the importance of non-formal education and on the acquisition of comparative information on good practice. A high point was the Commonwealth Conference on Mon-formal Education held in New Delhi in 1979 (Fordham, 1980).

In the 1980s, the World Bank retreated from interest in non-formal and Adult Education and turned back to primary schooling. The Education for All Conference sponsored by UNESCO was held at Jomtien, Thailand and was also an interesting example of this development (World Health Organization, 1991). Originally seen as concerned primarily with Adult Education and linked with International Literacy Year, its prime focus shifted and most of the official papers commissioned for it were about formal schooling.

## International Professional Organizations and Scholorly Activity

The links between Comparative Adult Education and Comparative Education have been mentioned at various national and regional conferences on Comparative and International Education. At these conferences some sessions on comparative studies have been arranged but they have mostly tended to focus on the international. Only a few of the presentations have been on Adult Education and of these only an occasional one has been on Comparative Adult Education.

The World Council of Comparative Education Societies was founded in 1970 and has organized seven World Congresses of Comparative Education. It is recalled that Dr. Roby Kidd and Dr. Alexander Charters and others made presentations related to Comparative Adult Education at the first World Congress held in Ottawa 1970.

Before the VIIth Congress, held in Montreal in 1989, CSRCAE approached the organizers to request consideration of Comparative Adult Education. It was decided that CSRCAE would arrange four

sessions with three presentations at each session. All of the papers were presented and copies given to the Chair at the Conference. They were subsequently published at the University of the District of Columbia (Charters & Cassara, 1989).

Plans were made by Colin Titmus to have participation by CSRCAE members at this VIIIth World Congress on Comparative Education.

A number of professional international bodies have also provided a dynamic thrust. They include: the International Council for Distance Education, founded in 1939 as the International Council for Correspondence Education; the International Federation of Workers' Education Associations founded in 1947; the International Congress of University Adult Education in 1961; the International Coumcil of Adult Education in 1972; and the International Community Education Association in 1974. The ICAE, based in Toronto, has fostered comparative studies. Some of them as well as other statements on Comparative Adult Education have been published in Convergence, the Journal of ICAE. Although mainly only in English, Convergence has published in other languages - French, Spanish and Russian. Abstracts of each article are published in the other three languages. Some articles on Comparative Adult Education have been published in the International Journal of Lifelong Education.

An important aspect of these meetings and conferences of organizations has been the opportunities for face to face meetings of educators of adults who are studying Comparative Adult Education. They have facilitated networking following the conferences.

International handbooks and yearbooks provide useful information to persons studying Comparative Adult Education, e.g., the series, International Yearbook on Adult Education (Knoll).

International Scholarly Effort in Comparative Adult Education

This brief history shows the diverse roots from which Comparative Adult Education has grown and the various influences that have contributed to its growth as a field of study and research.

As stated, the first World Conference on Comparative Adult Education was at Exeter, U.S.A. in 1966 and was followed by World conferences at Nordborg, Denmark (1972); Oxford, United Kingdom (1987); Frascati, Italy (1988; and Ibadan, Nigeria (1991). The Ibadan one was the first in a developing nation. Some of the papers of these conferences do not treat Adult Education topics consistent with the definition stated earlier. Nevertheless the papers do reflect an expansion of the scope of Comparative Adult Education and did promote some studies that were explicitly designed to focus on Comparative Adult Education.

A Report of the Oxford Conference was published in Convergence (Youngman, 1988) and a copy of each of the presentations is held in the Adult Education Collection at Syracuse University (Presentations, 1987). Proceedings of some conferences have been published and are listed in the End Notes (Liveright & Haygood, 1968; Blakely, 1972; Lichtner, 1989). The Proceedings from Ibadan are in process.

Agendas, analyses and discussions of the four Conferences and other conferences and meetings are referred to in Comparative

Adult Education: State of the Art with Annotated Resource Guide (Charters & Siddiqui, 1989). It is the most recent listing of materials in the English language, but with reference also to some materials in other languages. That book's final paragraph says, in part:

> Consequently, there is a strong evidence of growing new internationalism as well as of the awareness of the need for global exchange of values across societal systems and ideologies. The entire world is moving toward the concept and practice of life-long learning. There is an increased willingness, especially in the West, to learn from others (Charters, 1981), something that was rare during and soon after the European colonial period. This attitude certainly bodes well for enhanced understanding among nations and cultures, global peace and justice, through studies in comparative adult education (Charters & Siddiqui, 1989, p. 23).

Preceding this book was an Anthology which identified the significant publications - Comparative Studies in Adult Education; An Anthology (Bennett, Kidd & Kulich, 1975). Two other books, Comparing Adult Education Worldwide (Charters & Associates, 1981), and Landmarks in International Adult Education: A Comparative Analysis (Charters & Hilton, 1989), are recent studies that are more rigorous in adhering to the definition of Comparative Adult Education.

From time to time Convergence publishes articles on Comparative Adult Education. One issue contains articles that discuss important issues in Comparative Adult Education in an early stage of development. As announced in the Introduction, "In this issue we describe some of the first steps that have been taken and those now being planned to establish meaningful comparative studies" (Convergence, 1970, p. 1). Articles in this issue are by: Malcolm S. Adiseshiah, Robert A. Carlson, J. Roby Kidd,

Jindra Kulich, John Lowe, Dusan M. Savicevic, Claude Touchette, and Coolie Verner.

A major report of case studies on training in several countries provides significant information that warrants further comparative analysis (Petersen, et al., 1982).

There has also been considerable work carried on comparing Adult Education in specific areas such as agriculture extension. Several chapters of a recent book compares principles, methodologies and systems relating to agriculture (Rivera & Gustafson, 1991).

Dr. Roby Kidd, a pioneer and author, is recognized as having introduced the first university course in Comparative Adult Education at Ontario Institute for Studies in Education in the early 1960s. Since then some universities in all continents have come to offer courses in Comparative Adult Education. Some of these courses and programs have been offered using other terms such as agricultural extension and human resource development.

As stated previously, CSRCAE conducts its activities primarily in the English language. It is recognized, however, that scholars from Eastern and other countries have made significant contributions in their own language (Siddiqui, 1990).

The scholars of Eastern Europe have contributed significantly to ideas about methodology, notably Ana Krajnc (Krajnc, 1981) and Dusan Saviecevic (Saviecevic, 1981) of Yugoslavia and Ryszard Pachocinski (Pachocinski, 1989) of Poland. An influential serial publication - beside International Journal of University Adult Education and Convergence - has been due to German scholarship (Hinzen).

The late Felix Adam arranged for seminars on Comparative Adult Education in three cities in Venezuela. The seminars were led by Charters and the presentations were later expanded into a monograph which was published in English and Spanish (Charters, 1989).

Another illustration is the International Seminar on Functional Illiteracy and Professional Incompetence as Risk Factors of Modern Civilization and the Role of Adult Continuing Education in Overcoming Them, held in Leningrad, USSR, 1990. This topic compared the topic by participants from several republics of the USSR and other countries (M. & A. Charters, 1990).

Another article in the Indian Adult Education Journal indicates current interest in Comparative Adult Education in India (Charters, 1991).

An electronic communication was held between educators of adults at the University of Botswana and Alexander Charters at Syracuse University (Youngman & Charters, 1990).

In conclusion it is clear that scholarly contributions in Comparative Adult Education have increased significantly, particularly during the past twenty years. Furthermore, the studies and research in this emerging field are becoming increasingly rigorous in terms of the definition cited above.

Alexander N. Charters
June 1992

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